

# **The making of labour migration households: Migration, a historical and phenomenon in Madibeng**

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# INTRODUCTION

- Labour migration been a common practice in South Africa (SA).
- Made popular by the labour migrant system with the discovery of gold and minerals in SA.
- The practice of migrating from rural to urban industrial centers has since become normalised practice as means of survival



# Introduction cont...

- This paper attempts to historicise internal labour migration in households of Madibeng Municipality of the North West Province.
- Provides an overview of how these households became labour migrant households,
- And reflects on the historical making of labour migrants over generations in contemporary Madibeng rural households.



# Historical overview: migration patterns in SA

- Migration patterns in SA formed and grew during the later decades of 19<sup>th</sup> century with the discovery of gold in the Witwatersrand.
- Historically, mobility and population settlement patterns in SA strongly influenced by the mining industry.
- The migrant labour system= supply of cheap black labour



# **Madibeng, a historical labour migrant destination and sending area**

- Brits have continuously been inhabited by local people,
- Foreign migrants would also move into the area, some in transit while others settled with their families.
- Brits attracted labour migrants through its booming commercial farming.



# Madibeng, a historical labour migrant destination and sending area

- *Originally I'm from Warmbaths, currently known as Bela-Bela. I was born there. When I was still very small, maybe primary school age, I might not be accurate because I didn't go to school, my parents, sister and I moved to a place full of farms just outside Brits called De Kroon. The specific farm I grew up in is called Herbat. After working there for a while, my father left us in Brits and was moved to a farm where they specialised in wood. The place is called Komatipoort in Mpumalanga. We continued staying in Brits with my mother who was working in the farm, while raising us on her own until it got too much for her and she left us there. When I was old enough, I started to work on the same farm as well. I met my ex-partner at the farm, and it is also where all my children were born (Ipeleng, April 2016).*



# **Migration, a historical phenomenon in Madibeng**

- The restrictions of movements and denial of access to land for the black population in South Africa escalated the 'African agrarian crisis'.
- The labour migrant system= pattern where men continued to “live” in the rural areas but would leave their families for several months at a time whilst they went to earn money.



# Migration, a historical phenomenon in Madibeng

- *...by birth I'm from Letlhakaneng, another village further after you pass Maboloka. We moved with my parents because they were working in Pretoria city and it was hard for them to get transport to work and for my brother and I to attend school... transport was and still is a problem there... so we moved to Oskraal, there by the farm plots while they were looking for a place here in Rabokala (a village near Oskraal). After they found a place in Rabokala we then moved, this was around 1985. I used to attend school at Rabokala Primary, this is before there were houses here... then I finished my primary education, and later went to Maledu high school, but I didn't do my matric... (Neo, April 2016).*



# Migration, a historical phenomenon in Madibeng

- Researcher: *What were your reasons for not completing matric?*
- *I had a baby when I was sixteen years... I was still at secondary school by then... my boy was born in 1990... but after he turned five years I tried to go back to school but I wasn't successful. Then I stayed home for some time... after a while I landed a job at Zone Fifteen at Garankuwa Industrial area (Neo, April, 2016).*



# Migration, a historical phenomenon in Madibeng

- Researcher: *So what happened to your son?*
- *Because I was doing these piece jobs, I had to take my son to my grandmother in Letlhakaneng to look after him, and I would fetch him on weekends (Neo, April 2016).*



## **Internal labour migration, generational**

- Labour migration as a livelihood strategy presents itself to be generational for rural households in contemporary South Africa



# **Internal labour migration, generational**

- Mmamonare's family currently survives through a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation labour migrant.
- Mmamonare's father- worked in the Johannesburg mines
- Mmamonare, 75 year old pensioner- worked as a domestic worker in Glenvista, Johannesburg.
- Mmamonare's son- security guard in Thabazimbi



# Internal labour migration, generational

- *When I grew up my father was working in Gauteng mines. He only came home once in a while. By the time he came home for good he was sick and he didn't live long after that, he died. So you see I never really knew him (Mmamonare, 30 March 2016).*
- The majority of the participants in this study= 3<sup>rd</sup> generation as a unskilled labour migrant



# What then? Then what?

- Rural labour migrant households- NOT homogeneous, but
- What about the vicious cycle that traps labour migrant households into poverty and unskilled labour migrancy?
- Will the creation of employment in the rural spaces or where the people are be the solution?



# Thank You!

- Do people want to stop migrating to the cities for labour?
- One thing is for sure, internal unskilled labour migration has no place in democratic contemporary South African economy.
- Creative and sustainable contributions to socio-economic policies needed!



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